

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PHOEBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

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MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XI. PUT TO THE QUESTION.

IN the annals of Dido House, there was never known a day like the one that followed. To the elder Miss Cooke, to whom the news was gradually broken, it nearly brought back that attack which she had had many years before, and which was of an obscure and mysterious character. What! the highly-connected, prudish Dido House, the grand finishing-school of England, to be so disgraced—"A man found at midnight in the grounds!"

The enormity of the thing could scarcely be realised by the three spinster heads bent together in anxious council. Disguise it as one would, Dido House was contaminated.

After an awful morning in council, a lictor was despatched for Phoebe. Already she had been missed from the classes, and strange rumours of some terrible crime had permeated the ranks of the girls. She was led in, and directed to stand near the door. In the presence of the Doge, the trembling Phoebe was told "that she was to be sent away, and expelled forthwith! She had brought disgrace, if not ruin, on the establishment," added the elder Miss Cooke in a faltering voice, and she hoped that Heaven would forgive her. But that was not the worst part. The awful side of the case was that one so young, and supposed to be so pure and innocent, should have sunk so low—

Phoebe was touched by the genuine agitation of the old lady, though shocked at this sad description of her offence. The real peril of her situation began to dawn on her.

"Oh! I am not so bad, dearest Miss Cooke," she began. "It was really nothing but a lark." Miss Cooke winced at this forbidden word. "I did not think there was any harm in it—indeed I did not. It was all a——" accident, Phoebe was going to add; but she recollected that it was nothing of the kind, being a serious, regularly-organised arrangement. She, therefore, checked herself.

"Ah! I thought so," said the principal, after waiting a little time. "You see you cannot carry out the deception—you are not depraved as yet. You had better confess the whole truth from the beginning. There may be something that will excuse you. You have always been so giddy, and don't seem to know the distinction between right and wrong. How was it that you first became acquainted with this—this man?"

Phoebe bit her lip, then hung her head. How could she tell? What in the wide world was she to do? She was utterly unsuited to such a crisis, or to dangers like the present. Everything had been made smooth for her; or, rather, there had never been difficulties of any kind in her path. Others had always stood between her and them. Now she was suddenly thrust out upon the world to shift for herself.

"Come, my poor child," said the principal, softening as she saw Phoebe's piteous state, "confide in me. Tell me the whole story from the beginning. It may not be so bad after all."

Phoebe looked at her despairingly.

"I can't—I can't now, at least. You mustn't ask me. Indeed, no——"

The Doge and exempt exchanged glances. The effect upon their minds was that the

whole business was far more dreadful than they had imagined, and that something too terrible remained yet to be confessed. They gave her up from that moment.

"Alas! she is lost to all shame," said Miss Emma; "hopelessly lost."

"What have I done to be treated in this way? Won't you take my word? Did you ever find me out in a falsehood? Indeed, and indeed, Miss Cooke, I thought it was no harm. And if I could only tell you——"

Again looks were interchanged. After a pause, the prisoner was remanded. She gave the jailor who took her away a look of scornful defiance. They would not tame her in that way. As she stood in her room, her hair roughened by frequent tossing it back, and two fiercely-glowing spots on her cheeks, her delicate nose curled in rebellion, she looked a perfect "little pickle." When she was alone, however, all this resolution forsook her, and a feeling of despair came on her. Her situation was the most helpless conceivable. What if they really would "expel" her—awful word, like penal servitude for life to the professional criminal—from the school! And though her mother had been sent for, who might protect and save her, how should she dare to face her—a woman who would be so keenly alive to such a disgrace? No matter. Nothing in the world should get her to betray her friend! That was as fixed and eternal as the laws and decrees of those Medes and Persians which Miss Emma Cooke had so often prosed about.

The gallant creature was comforting herself with this self-sacrifice when relief and sympathy came. The door was thrown open, and her friend stood before her. In an instant Phoebe was in her arms, and pouring out a whole torrent of protestations as to the oppressions she was subjected to, and her firm resolution "never, never, to betray her friend. They are going to send me away, and expel me. Let them, if they like—not a word shall they extract from me." She had quite forgotten what she had concealed from Adelaide.

The other listened calmly.

"You are not to suffer for anyone else," she said, "still less for me. I never could allow that, where the fault has been mine. But how was all this found out?"

She seemed to have the air of knowing to what Phoebe was alluding.

"Oh, by their infamous and dishonourable spy system, of course," said Phoebe,

indignantly. "That mean Corbett was watching me. She has never forgiven or forgotten her being discovered with the brandy-bottle. She watched me into the garden, and heard every word."

"I see," said the other. "When you went to meet him in the garden?"

"Yes," said Phoebe, whose misfortunes now made this secret arrangement appear very trifling indeed. "I was settling it all with him for you. And he had all but promised me—and——"

"Indeed! But you forget," said Adelaide, "I knew nothing of this."

"Oh, it is no matter now," said Phoebe, excitedly. "It is all at an end now. He tried to defend me, and to take it all on himself. If you only heard the way Emma Cooke attacked him, and the gentlemanly way in which he took it. He is a perfect hero."

"This, of course, was not the first time," said Adelaide, as if speculating on the matter.

"Dear no," answered Phoebe, eagerly. "I went two or three times, and contrived it all myself. Wasn't it courageous of me? So provoking, too! Just a little more and I should have persuaded him——"

"Persuaded him to do what?"

"Oh, to——well, you must know he hesitated—for his position is a little difficult, dearest Adelaide. As he says, marriage is a very serious thing. But what I said seemed to make an immense impression on him. Oh yes." And Phoebe smiled.

"No doubt," said Adelaide, slowly. "But you have brought yourself into a serious position, and will have to fight your way through as well as you can."

"But, you know," said Phoebe, a little taken back, "it was all for you——"

"For me?" said Adelaide angrily. "You cannot, and you must not, say that. Don't talk to me of such things. Did I ask your interference? I am out of the business. You have been carrying on the affair without my knowledge, and on your own account."

"On my own account? It was all for you; indeed it was," said Phoebe, with all her old eager affection returning. "I thought I would see him without telling you; make him promise to fulfil his engagement, and then come to you with the news as a little surprise. I thought it would make you so happy. I saw that I had some influence over him. But is this the return you make me?"

The cold lines of Adelaide's face relaxed. There was nature and truth in what Phoebe said.

"Forgive me," said she. "No doubt you did it for the best. Tell me all about it."

She was exerting herself to put a constraint upon her disposition, and banish that permanent cloud of suspicion in which she lived.

Delighted at this change, for coldness was like physical pain to our Phoebe, she was about to begin an animated history of all her proceedings, when, suddenly, the awkward turn of the last scene rose before her. She had no fertility or dexterity of resource, and she had an instinct that her explanations would only make her appear guilty or disloyal. She began to falter—her eyes drooped. But she had betrayed enough to satisfy the other.

Adelaide waited a few moments. The old hard look returned.

"No matter," she said at length; "I have no wish to know what only concerns yourself. As you will have to suffer the penalty, you are entitled to keep up any reserve you please. As I said, this part of the affair is entirely your own."

Such a tone always made Phoebe hostile.

"Well, if I were to tell you," she said, a little maliciously, "perhaps you might not be so much pleased as you may think you would be."

"Perhaps not," said Adelaide. "But I am not thinking of being pleased—that is not a luxury for poor people like me. I must leave you now. Seriously, you need not feel much anxiety. You have plenty of friends, you know. Good-bye."

She quitted Phoebe suffering from a sense of the deepest wrong, and believing that she had been treated unkindly by the most faithless of friends.

"To treat me in such a manner, after the way I have behaved! Another girl would not have acted so generously, and with such self-denial. After getting into such a scrape all for her, to meet with such a return!"

Phoebe remained in strict duress—gallant, unsubdued; always wearing the same defiant air—"hardened," they called it—when any jailor presented herself. But, in secret, she was pining and wearing her heart out. A letter had been written to Mrs. Dawson, in which the offence had been described as a sort of fearful crime, without details of any kind, and they were daily expecting advices from her. That lady, however,

was on one of her many junketings in a remote part of the country, and the letter was following her about. Phoebe could have given precise information as to the locality, and thus have saved some posts; but, as may be conceived, she was not likely to aid in such researches. Meanwhile, this pretty flower—deserted, secluded—hung its head, and drooped every day more and more.

There was yet another influence on which the governing powers of the school relied at a crisis. Nothing could be done without Dean Drinkwater, who was always sent for, "express," on any outbreak—just as an eminent physician might be called in. Final decision was put off until he was possessed of the case. But he was now on a visit to "the palace," where, of course, he could not be disturbed. He was expected, however, for the day of the "academical exercises," to perform the ornamental office of distributing the premiums to the young ladies with appropriate little speeches, and, in a manner, take the chair among the guests. He had written that if he could "get away from the palace"—it was only from such great houses that he could "get away;" those of less pretensions he left without difficulty—he would try and arrive the day before, to investigate this most serious case.

Thus matters remained in a very painful state for all parties concerned. A cloud seemed to have descended on the house. The days dragged by slowly, until it drew on to the day or two before breaking up. This, under ordinary circumstances, would have been a true gala time for Phoebe. She would have led the dance, as it were, and have been seen fluttering from the top to the bottom of the house, her ringing laugh stimulating the delightful labours of packing up. The girls, indeed, were in a rather selfish excitement, thinking of the joys of going home; though it was well known that Phoebe had committed "something dreadful," that Dean Drinkwater had been sent for, and that the girl was about to be expelled.

Towards evening, on this momentous day, news went through the house that Dean Drinkwater had arrived, and was closeted in the parlour with the two Miss Cookes. Dean Drinkwater was a tall, full-blown dignitary of the emollient kind. His composition was rich and juicy, and his voice seemed to ooze upwards through a well-oiled pipe. He mixed with the best; his manners were soft and

courtly; and it was thought certain that he would one day carry a mitre on his carriage-panel.

The two ladies attended on him with awful countenances, and related the terrible business:

"A fearful thing has occurred. One of the most shocking visitations for the school."

"Good gracious me, Miss Cooke! What d'ye mean?"

They told him the affair.

To Miss Cooke's surprise, he did not start from his seat, or cover his face with his hands.

"Such a blow to fall on me, Mr. Dean," said Miss Cooke, "at my age. It is ruin! The school is disgraced!"

"Oh dear me no, not at all," said Dean Drinkwater. "I suppose you haven't made the affair public?"

"Public, sir! No."

"So much the better. I am afraid the child is giddy—pity she's not more steady—eh? Foolish sort of Tomboy, I think."

Rather astonished, Miss Cooke replied: "Quite lost to shame and decency! But what are we to do with her, Dean Drinkwater? She must be sent away; we owe it to the other girls not to have them contaminated."

The Dean waved his hand, as one would do when asking the people to keep seated at a meeting.

"Nonsense! don't do it at all," he said; "let there be no fuss. This is a thing to be hushed up. If you must get her away, get her away quietly. I would just penance her, and say no more about it."

"But here are the holidays at hand. As a matter of conscience, could we let her mix with the other girls?"

"Well—eh—not exactly," said the Dean, a little puzzled—a puzzle too which his answer did not resolve. "But there is a way of doing these things. Her mother will be here—a sensible, proper woman of the world—one of the Digges family, whom I know very well. I shall see her myself, and we can all talk it over together, and settle something. What sort is the young man? Made out anything about him, and his connections?"

"We make out?" said Miss Cooke. "No, indeed, Mr. Dean. But the girl is so hardened, she will confess nothing."

"Then I must talk to her. It may very likely turn out only a school-girl's frolic."

"Emma," said Miss Cooke, austere, "show the Dean the letter. When I tell

you, Dean Drinkwater, that this shocking letter was snatched from her hand, that a false key to our garden-gate has been made and procured, and that there are reasons to suspect that this clandestine intercourse has been going on for months, you will not take this indulgent view."

The Dean looked grave at this accumulation of evidence, then began to read the letter.

"This is a little awkward," he said; "still the young man may turn out to be very proper, you know. I wouldn't make too much of it. If we could only get some information! You had better send the girl to me at once. I must talk to her."

Now came the licitor with summons to the parlour for the imprisoned Phœbe, who, as she heard the step outside, brushed away her tears, though she could not drive back that delicate flush that had coloured her face. She followed proudly, and entered haughtily. The Dean, whose eye was always being exercised in such matters, thought what a refined, "clean-bred" air she had, and that by-and-by she ought to make a "very fair match." He wished that some of his own ponderous, slow-moving girls would offer the same promise.

The door was closed on Phœbe, and she was left alone with the judge, who received her with a plaintive air, as though all was over, the fingers of both hands joined together with great nicety—his favourite pose when dealing with clergy, servants, &c. Phœbe knew it well, as she had often "taken it off" to the life, for the girls.

CHAPTER XII. THE DEAN AND PHŒBE.

"WELL, child, this is all sad work," said Dean Drinkwater, "very sad. Eh?" an interrogative that seemed to Phœbe either to invite contradiction, or discussion, perhaps, of the statement. "I fear it is going to end badly. You must see that you have brought disgrace on the school of these good ladies, and ruined yourself for life—eh?"

"I haven't done anything disgraceful," said Phœbe, excitedly. "Let them prove it—let them try me, and give me fair play. The law of England allows me that! Then we'll see."

"Oh! childish—rubbish!" said the Dean, impatiently; "don't talk in that way. But come over here. Now, sit down there, and tell me all about this unfortunate business. There may be something extenuating."

Phœbe met this advance with the warmest impulse.

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Dean, you are right," she said, cosily; "so there was. It was only a little bit of fun after all, and——"

"To be sure; yes. And tell me now how was it that you met this young man. Who and what is he?"

"Oh, he is one of the nicest——" began Phoebe; then, darting a suspicious look at the emollient clergyman, she drew her chair away. "No, I really can't tell you anything," she said, decidedly; "I know that I have done no harm."

"Some friend, then, of the other girls?" insinuated the Dean.

"I decline to tell you anything," said Phoebe, defiantly.

"Oh, but you must be made to tell, my good girl. You have behaved scandalously, and, for one of your tender age, even disreputably."

Phoebe was biting her lips, but would not answer a word.

"You know it comes to this, that you cannot be allowed to associate with respectable girls. Admit a strange, low fellow into the garden of a respectable house—it's perfectly scandalous!"

"He was neither strange nor low, or anything of the kind," said the excited Phoebe.

"I believe you are lost to a sense of shame. Go to your room—go back to your room."

"If my poor dear father were alive, no one would dare say such things to me. I wish only Tom were here. He'd not allow——"

But here her voice faltered, her courage gave way; and the licitor, waiting at hand and listening, had to lead her off sobbing.

Much astonished at being thus threatened with "Tom," and quite put out at his failure, the Dean was now found to have completely changed his opinions.

"You should not keep the girl here to corrupt her companions. You owe it to the other pupils who are under your charge. She is corrupted—hopelessly so."

He thus, with an air of originality, made use of arguments that had been pressed on himself before.

"We feared it," said Miss Cooke the elder, tremulously. "Yet she could not have learned it here, where it is our aim to inculcate——"

"Yes, of course" said the Dean, rather roughly, and not inclined to listen to the school prospectus. "But the hardened way she addressed me—threatened me with some one she called Tom. Such impertinence! Who is Tom?"

"A wild, abandoned fellow, her brother," struck in Miss Emma.

"All in keeping, I see," said the Dean. "But this won't do, you know. I am not accustomed to be set at defiance." He was thinking of the last troublesome clergyman he had had to deal with. "She must not think she shall conceal things from me. I'll probe to the bottom of it before the day is out. Has she any confidantes—bosom friends—or anything of that sort?"

"Oh yes," said the two ladies; "Adelaide Cross."

"What! that stiff-necked, ill-regulated young person I saw before? Well, she might know something, or be made to tell something——"

"Perhaps so," said Miss Cooke, doubtfully. "Would you wish to see her?"

Adelaide Cross was accordingly sent for, and marshalled to the presence of Dean Drinkwater.

"You know about this unfortunate girl," said the Dean, coming to the point at once. He did not feel quite comfortable, however, under Adelaide's cold, inquiring gaze. "Now, from your knowledge of her, would you suppose that there was someone else, with more cleverness, making use of her? What would you say now? You are her intimate friend, I am given to understand;" and the Dean, resting his elbows on the arms of his chair, brought his outstretched fingers together.

There was a knowing glance in the Dean's eye, as though he had shown his sagacity in this speculation; but he did not notice the sort of half-amused, half-contemptuous look of Adelaide, who may have been enjoying the picture of self-sufficiency before her.

"What would you say?" he repeated.

"I should say," answered she, slowly, "that it was probable."

"As her friend, you think so?"

"Pardon me, that is a mistake. I can scarcely be called her friend. But I believe, from her impulsive, volatile, and, I may say, from——" here she paused—"from her affectionate disposition, that she may have been drawn into this business from a wish to help another."

"Help another! But do you know this of your own knowledge?"

"You have asked me my opinion," said Adelaide.

"Well, speak out, then; you are not going to have the innocent punished."

"I did not say she was innocent. I

know nothing about it. But I do believe that the guilty party is not before you."

"For shame," he said; "you wish to screen her. What guilty party are you talking of?"

"I am telling you the truth—what I believe to be the truth—and to save you from a mistake. She does not deserve harsh treatment."

The Dean was a cunning person, and delighted in little investigations of this kind, to which he was fond of submitting his wife, servants, and children at home. He felt that he was on the scent, as it were, and was rather vexed that he should be opposed in this fashion.

"This is very childish," he said; "you don't know what you are talking of. We can't allow it. Speak out, I bid you."

Adelaide had her eyes fixed on a letter which the Dean was carelessly turning over in his hand.

"First, is there any positive proof against her?" she asked abruptly.

"Dear, yes; it has really gone to most discreditable lengths."

"What's that letter?"

"Never mind about that!"

"I will tell you all I know," said she eagerly, "if I but see that letter."

The Dean began to think himself a diplomatist. "Well, I see no objection to you looking at it," and he placed it in her hand.

Adelaide read it aloud, and read it very slowly:

"DEAR MISS PHOEBE,—During that delightful interview—" Adelaide paused—"I had not courage to tell you what was in my thoughts. We talked of other matters; but all the while you must have guessed what I longed to say, but what I dared not speak. I can no longer help to carry on the delusion, which has been the cause of our meeting. I am certain that, from the first moment we met, you saw the change that took place in me. It may seem fickle, heartless, if you will—I cannot help it. Nothing could be called heartless of which you have been the cause. Had I not met you, I should have remained faithful to what I fancied was my first love. But I know you can be indulgent, for, as I said, you must have seen, from the first moment I saw you, that it was to you all my thoughts turned."

Here Adelaide paused again, then went on:

"I know that during our hurried meeting of to-night, that I shall not be able to say what I feel to you. So I write now,

"May I venture to tell you also what I fancy I have seen in your eyes, your sweet voice, and in your letters—that I am not wholly indifferent to you?"

"I fear that you may be offended, or think that I have taken advantage of the confidence you so generously placed in me. Still, you know that I love you. I shall not rest until I hear from you, to say that you are not angry with me, and that I may look forward to another delightful meeting, when you will tell me that you are not offended with me; and believe me to be ever your faithful and unchanging admirer,
F. PRINGLE."

The Dean listened with quite a new interest to this recital, for Adelaide read it with a power and emphasis that made it quite dramatic.

"Now," he said, "if we knew who was the friend she has betrayed in this way."

"Is it not clear?" said Adelaide. "This paper speaks for itself, does it not?"

"Well, it does in a certain measure," said the Dean, mystified at being addressed in this strain, "to a certain extent."

"It speaks for itself then. Recollect it cannot be said that I have betrayed a companion. That letter is as sacred as a confession. What I can add to it is simply this—I know that the affair began by her volunteering to aid a friend in the business. She has ended, as you have seen," and she held up the letter, "by supplanting that friend in this treacherous way."

"Well! what is it you know?" asked the Dean.

"This for certain—that she kept these meetings secret from the person she called her friend."

"Oh, I see," said the Dean. "This is taking rather an ugly complexion, indeed. Well, what else? Go on."

"I know no more. Quite enough, I should think."

Again taken aback by this air of equality, the Dean looked at her for a moment.

"It's really most disreputable," he said, "from beginning to end. The girl ought to be sent away at once. She should not be under the roof when the strangers come here to-morrow. You can go now."

Adelaide retired.

CHAPTER XIII. ADELAIDE'S WARNING.

AGAIN the council assembled; and once more the hapless Phoebe was brought before it. Under this agitating process the poor child was giving way. Unconsciously the authorities were pursuing

the course which is so much in favour in foreign countries—of enfeebling the prisoner by the moral torture of suspense and pertinacious questioning. Poor little Phoebe! It seemed cruel, this unequal struggle between three stern and pitiless elders and a mere child.

The Dean at once "took up the word."

"I have seen your companion, Adelaide Cross"—here Phoebe anxiously raised her head, and her face brightened—"who has, I must say, attempted to put the best construction on your conduct."

Phoebe's eyes lighted up. "I knew she would—she would stand by me, I was certain."

"Oh hush, none of that," said the Dean, waving off this obnoxious piece of Jacobinism; "no more of that, please. You are not conscious of the very serious, I may say awful, position in which you stand. Miss Cooke owes it to her conscience, and to her establishment, not to keep you an hour longer here. You are to leave this evening."

Phoebe gave a little cry, then bursting into a torrent of sobs, said passionately:

"What! expel me? What have I done! Oh, mamma, mamma! where are you? Help me against these cruel people."

The Dean winced; but the elder Miss Cooke was affected, and said, in a not unkindly way:

"My poor child, what can we do? You have committed a sin terrible in one so young as you are. I would keep you if I could, but I owe it to the others to make an example. The only thing left for you is to tell the whole truth, every word of it; nothing but the entire truth"—an imperfect version of the well-known oath. "Who has led you into all this? Come, confess—tell us everything. It may not turn out so badly after all. We can see what is to be done when in possession of all the facts."

At this appeal the hapless Phoebe drew herself up; a sort of chivalrous glow came into her face. What! betray the one who, at the pinch, had so bravely defended her—never!

"Not if you were to cut me into bits," she said.

There was a silence. The three judges looked at each other.

"It is idle, then, saying more," said the Dean. "She is hopelessly, depellorably"—so he pronounced it—"hardened; she must be sent off forthwith."

Miss Emma Cooke advanced, and took Phoebe by the arm, much as the warders do to a prisoner in the dock after sentence, then led her away.

"You are to pack up your things as quickly as you can," she said. "A carriage has been sent from the Red Lion, and Mrs. Corbett is to take you home."

With all this weight of trouble, the allusion to this name brought the colour to Phoebe's cheeks. She walked with a greater pride; but when she was left alone, this deserted her, and a sort of despair filled her. She sat there stupefied, and when the matron came in a few minutes after to see that she was packing up, Phoebe said, distractedly:

"I can't do it. Do it yourselves. You may kill me, if you like. What have I done to be treated in this way?"

A friendly maid came with some rough comfort, to help to "get her things together." The unhappy Phoebe could only fling herself on the bed, and weep and sob:

"Oh, how wretched I am! They have all left me, as if I was a thing infected."

"Don't take on so, Miss Phoebe," said the maid. "The missus said no one was to be let to see you, but I'll fetch Miss Cross to you if they were to turn me out the next moment."

"Oh, do, do, do!" cried Phoebe. "You are a good, dear soul—the only one that's been kind to me. Fetch her quick. I must see her before they turn me out on the world."

But, just as the girl turned to leave, Adelaide herself stood in the doorway. Phoebe flew to her like some trembling, wounded pigeon. She was too exhausted to speak, and could only flutter on that friendly bosom, as it seemed to her, uttering faint notes of suffering and exhaustion. The other did not shake her off, but endured this affectionate greeting.

"So they are sending you away—expelling you," said Adelaide, and she dwelt on the word, "in disgrace?"

"Yes," said Phoebe, with loving confidence. "But, dearest Adelaide, I would not speak, not if they killed me. No, no; they could not get me to tell a single thing."

Adelaide gave her a look that Phoebe often thought of afterwards. Still she spoke calmly.

"Tell! what have you to tell? Pray finish with all this acting. Don't give

yourself the trouble to keep it up to the last."

"Why, what do you mean?" said Phoebe, retreating in wonder from her. "Why do you speak to me in this way?"

"Why? Because you have behaved treacherously, ruined all my hopes. But I want no airs of sacrifice for me. Dry your eyes. Don't be afraid; you shall not be expelled. Well you knew, all the time, there was no fear of it—though you wished to make your capital out of it—and that, at last, the disclosure must come out!"

"She is mad," thought Phoebe, "perfectly mad."

"You don't think, do you," continued Adelaide, resuming her old calm manner, "that I would allow you to enjoy the heroic feeling of supposing that you were punished for me—lay me under an obligation for life? You never seriously fancied that?"

"Supposing that I would be punished for you!" repeated the bewildered Phoebe. "Surely I have been, and am going to be, disgraced, all for you; and would do so again—that is, if you were only like your old self. But something has changed you terribly."

"You will understand it all by-and-by, when you have thought it over. You may be satisfied with this, that I mean to take your place in that carriage which is now driving up. I scorn your aid."

"But I don't see it," said Phoebe, wildly. "You have become so cruel and so hostile to me. What have I done to you? What more could I do?"

"I don't care whether you think me changed or cruel, and the rest of it. If you want to know what I think, I can only tell you that you are a mass of treachery and deceit. I merely say this last word at parting, and take care that you understand me. Recollect, we are now quits. You can't say you have been punished for me. There is to be no more of the farce of being a victim—do you hear me?—remember that."

She quitted the room. Phoebe was scarcely listening. Looking from the window, she had seen with a thrill the fatal carriage from the Red Lion arrive. Her heart sank; it was the prison-van come to bear her away. She had but little faith in her late friend's promises of rescue. She was so cowed—her nerves so shattered by the events of these few days—that she entertained neither hope nor faith in anything.

UNFOLDING A TAIL.

THE Rev. Baring Gould tells us: "I well remember having it impressed upon me by a Devonshire nurse, as a little child, that all Cornishmen were born with tails; and it was long before I could overcome the prejudice thus early implanted in my heart against my Cornubian neighbours. I looked upon those who dwelt across the Tamar as scarcely to be classed with Christian people, and certainly not to be freely associated with by tailless Devonians. I think my eyes were first opened to the fact that I had been deceived, by a worthy bookseller of L— with whom I had contracted a warm friendship; he having at sundry times contributed pictures to my scrap-book. I remember one day venturing to broach the delicate subject with my tailed friend, whom I liked notwithstanding his caudal appendage. 'Mr. —, is it true that you are a Cornishman?' 'Yes, my little man, born and bred in the West country.' 'I like you very much; but—have you really got a tail?' When the bookseller had recovered from the astonishment which I had produced by my question, he stoutly repudiated the charge. 'But you are a Cornishman?' 'To be sure I am.' 'And all Cornishmen have tails?' I believe I satisfied my own mind that the good man had sat his off; and my nurse assured me that such was the case with men of sedentary habits."

When the Devonshire boy grew up into a learned man, he made it a part of his work to ascertain how far this whimsical myth had extended—how far back in the vista of time, and over how large a portion of the earth. The result is very curious, showing that a belief in tailed men has been held with a resoluteness proof against all ordinary philosophising.

Let us begin with the East, the birth-place of so many marvellous credulities.

Purchas, writing about the Philippine Islands two hundred and seventy years ago, stated that in the kingdom of Lambri were "some men with tayles like dogges, a spanne long;" and, in reference to Sumatra, "They say that there are certaine people there called Daraqui Dara, which have tayles like to sheepe." Dr. Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, was informed by an acquaintance, on returning from the East, that in the remote parts of the island of Borneo, tailed men are to be found. The doctor

spoke of his friend being a reliable and truthful man, but did not say whether he himself credited the rumour. Struys, a Dutch traveller, who described Formosa just two centuries ago, narrates that before he had visited that beautiful island, he had often heard that some of the natives have tails, like brute beasts. He had always disbelieved the assertion, and nothing would have removed his disbelief but the actual evidence of his own senses. During the sojourn of Struys on the island, a native, who had committed a murder, was tried and executed. "It was then I beheld what I had never thought to see. He had a tail more than a foot long, covered with red hair, and very like that of a cow. When he saw the surprise that this discovery created among the European spectators, he informed us that the tail was the effect of climate; for that all the inhabitants of the south side of the island, whence he had come, were provided with like appendages." Struys was very earnest in the declaration of this fact, claiming for it a truthfulness equal to anything he wished others to say to him; "that the man had a tail, I saw as distinctly as that he had a head." Formosa and the Philippines are not the only parts of the East where such facts (or statements of facts) are to be met with. Early in the present century, Captain Samuel Turner published the narrative of an Embassy to Tibet, including the particulars of an interview with the Deb Rajah of that country. "He told me of some wonders, for which I claim no other credit than that of repeating with fidelity the story of my informant. In the range of mountains north of Assam, he informed me there was a species of human beings with short straight tails, which, according to report, were extremely inconvenient to them, as they were inflexible; in consequence of which, they were obliged to dig holes in the ground before they could attempt to sit down." No inventor of burlesque, however rich in humour, could excel this.

Africa has produced a still greater number of stories than Asia and the remote East, of men provided with this undesirable addition to the usual characteristics of human beings. Harrison, in his *Highlands of Ethiopia*, mentions it as a common article of belief that Abyssinia contains a pigmy race of tailed men. Horneman mentions a current rumour, to the effect that between Abyssinia and the Gulf of Benin is to be met with a race of

tailed Anthropophagi called Miam-Miams. About fifteen years ago the French were very much taken up with this subject, which seemed to them deserving of more notice than it generally receives. In 1849 the French Government sent M. du Couret to explore some of the least known parts of Africa. In his "*Voyage au Pays des Niam-Niams*," he describes the pigmies as if he had seen them—as mostly under five feet high, ill-proportioned, thin, weak, and ugly, with short curly woolly hair, and "the external prolongation of the vertebral column, which in every individual, male or female, forms a tail of two or three inches long." This statement is certainly as clear and definite as it could well be. Du Couret had heard of the rumour among the Red Sea Arabs, and appears afterwards to have visited the Niam-Niams in their own country. MM. Arnault and Vayssière, after travelling in Africa, introduced the subject before the *Académie des Sciences* in 1850. In the next following year Castelman described an expedition of the Houssas against the Niam-Niams. Some of the latter were killed, and it was found that "they had all of them tails forty centimetres long, and from two to three centimetres in diameter; smooth, and alike in both men and women." We suspect this should be four centimetres, not forty.

Other stories of tailed Africans differ as to the region named, the length and appearance of the caudal appendage, and the inclusion of men as well as women among the wearers. M. D'Abbadie, when in that country, was told by an Abyssinian priest that "at the distance of fifteen days south of Herrar is a place where all the men have tails, the length of a span, covered with hair, and situated at the extremity of the spine. The females of that country are very beautiful"—not to European eyes, we presume—"and are tailless. I have seen fifteen of these people at Berberah, and am positive that the tail is natural." So far D'Abbadie's Abyssinian informant. About the same time (1851), or the next following year, Dr. Hubsch, physician to the hospitals of Constantinople, saw there a tailed negress. Her master, a slave-dealer, told him that she was a Niam-Niam, and that all of that tribe had tails, in some instances two feet long. "I have seen a man of the same race," says Dr. Hubsch, "who had a tail an inch and a half long, covered with a few hairs. He was robust,

well-built, and of ebony blackness. I knew also, at Constantinople, the son of a (native?) physician, aged two years, who was born with a tail an inch long. He belonged to the white Cameroon race, and one of his grandfathers possessed the same kind of appendage." If these are the Cameroons of Guinea, we greatly doubt whether there are any white natives in that region; but we tell the tales as we find them. About 1857 the Rev. T. J. Bowen, Baptist missionary in Central Africa, ascertained that the Arab and Moorish traders, in describing the natives of various regions of that continent, spoke of a tribe of little people only three feet high, and added, "Beyond them are a tribe called Alibiru, who have short inflexible tails."

As may naturally be supposed, such an addition to the human form is seldom spoken of favourably by those who have never possessed it. An old Portuguese divine declared as a verity that even Satan was created without a tail; it was only when the Evil One fell into sin that his tail sprang forth, "as an outward and visible token that he had lost the rank of an Angel, and sunk to the level of the Brutes." A witch story, of Polish origin, tells how the members of a particular family all became tailed, to their great mortification. "A witch made a quilt of human skin, and laid it down across the threshold of a house in which a wedding feast was being held. On the bridal pair stepping across the quilt they were suddenly transformed into wolves. The witch sought them out a year afterwards, and cast over them dresses of fur, with the hairy side outwards; but, unfortunately, the dress of the bridegroom was so short that it did not cover his tail; so that when restored to human form he retained this appendage. It became hereditary in his family." That there is something mischievous and tantalising about a tail seems to be felt at Seville; where, according to Doblado's Letters from Spain, ragged urchins out of doors take a mischievous delight in pinning paper tails to the dresses of women passing through the streets. They stick a crooked pin in a strip of white paper, and this becomes conspicuous enough on a Spanish black skirt or mantle. A number of boys then shout out "Larago, larago!" ("Drop it, drop it!") Every woman in the street looks round to see whether it is to herself that the unwelcome words are addressed. The fun of the thing is (to the

boys) that the bit of paper bobs round as she turns about, and is not always immediately detected by the wearer. On the other hand, there have been nations among whom the tail was more honoured than reproached. We read of one tribe of North American Indians who contend that all men originally had tails, long-haired, sleek, and comely; that these elegant appendages were further adorned with paint, beads, and wampum; that the men fell away from good; and that the Great Spirit thereupon punished them by curtailing them. The worst part of this story is that the tails were converted into women.

We have spoken of Asia, Africa, and America; but there is a little also to be said concerning our own England, in connection with this singular belief.

An old story associates the county of Kent with human tails, in a manner that at one time was distasteful to Kentish folk. It must be admitted that the legend was sufficiently aggravating. "St. Augustine came to a certain town, inhabited by wicked people, who refused his doctrine and prechynge utterly, and drof hym out of the town, castyng on hym the tayles of thornback or lyke fysshes; whereupon he besought Almighty God to shewe his judgement on them; and God sent to them a shamefull token; for the chyl dren that were born after in the place had tayles, as it is sayd, tyll they had repented them. It is sayd comynly that this befell at Strode in Kente; but blyssed be God, at thys daye is no such deformity." Another legend tells of Thomas a Becket, not of St. Augustine, and connects the insult with horse-tails instead of fish-tails. The archbishop, according to this version, while riding through Strode or Strood, was rudely received by the people, some of whom cut off his horse's tail; as a punishment, the children of those evil-doers were born with horses' tails. The legends of those times were not very exact, in relation either to topography or to chronology; and therefore we need not be surprised at a transfer of the incident to another part of England. Dorsetshire is implicated in one of the stories, which declares that "for castyng of fyshe tayles at this Augustyne, Dorsett men had tayles ever after." So strongly did a belief in something of this kind exist in the time of Edward the Sixth, that ignorant foreigners taunted the benighted English with their degradation. One of

the Protestant bishops of that reign, launching forth against monks and priests, complained bitterly of the spread of such calumnies, and added: "In these legends they have defamed the English with tails, as has been shown afore. An Englyshman now cannot travayle in another land by way of marchandyse or any other honest occupyng, but it is most contumeliously throwne in his tethe that all Englyshmen have tails." A singular tone of public sentiment is here depicted; showing how little foundation will suffice to build a belief upon. Notwithstanding the many centuries that intervened between the days of St. Augustine and those of Edward the Sixth, and the doubt as to the period when the first legend on the subject was written, the stupid credence still existed, and was made use of as a weapon between rival theological parties. We have one very remarkable proof of the persistence of this notion in the fact that Bailey, in the first edition of his English Dictionary (1731), brought in the heading or item "Kentish Long-tails," as a designation that seemed to him in need of explanation. He adverts to the story of St. Augustine and the fish-tails; to that of Thomas à Becket and the horse-tail; to that which locates the incident at Cerne Abbas, in Dorsetshire; and to the insulting designation of "Kentish Long-tails," which had been for ages in use; he finally characterises the whole affair as "a lying wonder." This item was omitted from later editions of his dictionary, as if the belief had worn itself out.

The eccentric Lord Monboddo, who travelled and wrote in the second half of the last century, was not deterred by ridicule from arguing in favour of the human-tail theory. He was a Scottish judge, and threw something of a judicial tone into his odd speculations. He contended that men ought to have tails; that the lower end of the spine is fitted for one; and that the tail is a very expressive organ—denoting love, hate, joy, fear, and other emotions. Dr. Johnson was once conversing with him on the point, and said, in his sententious way: "Of a standing fact, sir, there ought to be no controversy; if there are men with tails, catch a homo caudatus." This was judicious, asking for facts in preference to theories.

Ireland has not quite escaped this visitation of the marvellous. In *Bulwer's Man Transformed*, or the *Artificial Changeling*, published somewhat over two centuries

ago, he says: "I am informed by an honest young man in Lieutenant-General Suter's regiment, that at Cashell, when stormed by the Lord Inchiquin, and nearly seven hundred put to the sword, there were found among the slain of the Irish, when they were stripped, divers that had tailes neare a quarter of a yard long. Forty soldiers testified upon their oaths that they were eye-witnesses." We fear that the "honest young man in Lieutenant-General Suter's regiment" must have blarneyed Bulwer most unmercifully. The latter was evidently well disposed to believe the marvellous, for he adds: "It is reported, also, that in Spain there is such another tailed nation."

"I will a tale unfold." Be it so. But it will also have been seen, from the foregoing, that we may change the spelling of the monosyllable, and still find much to unfold in connection with old-world stories which have had their day and passed away. Nay, there are, once now and then, indications that they live even in these days of literature and railways. The Rev. Baring Gould, as narrated above, has told us about his boyish days, his nurse, and the Devonian belief in the caudal appendages of Cornishmen. We find, too, no longer ago than the year 1860, a paragraph in a newspaper, to the effect that a boy was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne with a tail an inch and a quarter in length; and it is delightful to learn that, when the child was sucking, "the tail wagged with pleasure!"

PRIMROSES.

COME, put away that dreary book,
Lift up those tired eyes, and look
At what my hands unfold;
I knew you could not choose but smile,
Although your eyes are grave the while,
At my bright bit of gold.

Two yellow primroses; they grew,
Half-hidden from the careless view,
By hedgerow—grass, and spray;
A branch of last year's bracken spread
Its faded banner o'er the bed,
Where these bright treasures lay.

But I was searching all around
For early blossoms, so I found
What others might have passed.
Dear heart! it seems most meet to me
That our first flowers this year should be
Primroses, like the last.

Do you remember how we went,
Our hearts brimful with deep content,
Last year along the road?
My hand was lying on your arm,
Your eyes held mine as with a charm,
And I felt nearer God,

Because of your great love that day;
And, when you gathered by the way
A little flower for me,
My beating heart, before so meek,
Grew great with pride—I could not speak,
But thanked God silently.

"My little modest flower," you said,
And stroked my happy drooping head,
Till I looked up again;
"My little primrose flower, that brings
The fragrance of forgotten springs
To tired heart and brain!"

I know I was not fit to mate
With one like you, so good and great,
But love brings all things round;
For I could learn and you could teach,
So my life's low and narrow reach
Took wider view and bound.

Our hearts are wider too, we know,
And stronger than a year ago
Love's pulses beat to-day;
We feel by many a quiet hour,
By many a trouble shared, the power
Of calm affection's sway.

My darling! have I truly brought
The sunshine and the peace you sought,
When our two lives were blent?
Have I restored your springs of old?
Ah! take my bonny bits of gold!
I know you are content.

A RING IN OPALS.

IN the autumn of 1866 I chanced to be travelling in that vast and roadless forest, which stretches between the gold country of Mosquito and the mountains of Camasca. My sole companion was a handsome but headstrong peon, who regaled me from time to time with the story of his exploits in the filibuster war. I gathered that he was a Honduran, and had served under Guardiola, the "Tiger of Honduras," as people called him. Such a service is no recommendation, but he did his duty well towards me.

On a dull and sombre evening, after a long march under the endless shadow of the forest, we came to a rancho, all lonely and ruinous. We stood in a little clearing, where once, no doubt, had been a garden. Wild cane and creepers and convolvulus overgrew it now, for the merciless war of these unhappy countries had passed by the spot. There we decided to halt for the night. Guliermo led the cattle off for water and grass, since mules will not eat corn, and I tore down a yard or two of laths to build my fire. Scarcely had the wood lighted, when my ears caught a dull thud of horses' hoofs. I slipped quietly aside. In another moment two strangers appeared amongst the trees, vague and misty in the twilight. They halted instantly, observing my saddles and packages. The foremost drew his pistol, and cried in Mexican Spanish, "Who is here?"

"Gente de Paz!" I returned from my tree.

"Nary durned thief in this land but calls himself a man of peace!" muttered the second horseman.

I stepped forward. "You are American?" I asked, and held out my flask straightway. "Thanks!" replied the chief man, in English unmistakable. "We have some Bourbon you'll be glad to taste. And if you've no objection, we'll join camps, for the storm is coming down." Without more words he pushed through the oil-plants and the canes towards me.

I never saw a face that good Queen Bess might better have loved to look upon. His brows were strongly marked, and his eyes bore the keen strong gaze of a lion. Handsome features too had the stranger, but those eyes so drew attention, that one scarcely marked the rest. His costume was striking: a short, heavy jacket of Guatemalan wool, edged with a gaudy check and a long parti-coloured fringe; trousers of strong linen, girt with a belt of red leather in which hung pistol and knife; long boots, with spurs of silver, weighing each a pound. His horse was superbly caparisoned. I thought to recognise the class of man. I judged him that peculiar product of the States, a sportsman, or, as we should say, gambler. The other one was evidently a servant, and he proceeded to his duties, whilst the master sat upon a log, and aided me with supper.

The dusk settled swiftly down whilst we talked. Presently, Guliermo's white dress glimmered among the trees. He came towards the fire silently, surveying with critical eye the fine horses munching their corn beside it. Our new comrade turned, so that the mozo could see his features. For an instant he stood motionless, gazing wild-eyed; then, with an inarticulate cry, sprang forward, his machete upraised, and every white tooth gleaming under his moustache. I leaped in front, as did the stranger's servant. We threw Guliermo down, and tied him fast with a halter, he raving and biting the while. The frightened horses plunged at their lariats; Jake swore without intermission; flaming embers were thrown about; but through all this confusion the lion-like eyes were fixed derisively upon my negro. He screamed with all the violence of Creole passion; but when we had tied him fast, and, looking up, he met that laughing gaze, his voice gradually sank to silence.

"Cast him loose, Jake!" said the chief; and his servant obeyed.

Guliero rose up sullenly, and stood glaring.

"You've an unlucky hand, hombre!" said the other. "This is your third chance, and I'm still alive. When we machos strike, we hit, eh? Have the scars healed on your back?"

"Filibustero de los diables!" yelled the Indian, snatching a heavy brand from the fire. He hurled it with all his force. The other stepped aside, and the log fell against a tree, breaking in a rain of sparks. With a last savage curse upon us all, the mozo dashed into the forest.

We sat down to supper, and I asked point-blank, "You were a filibuster?"

Jake whispered in my ear, "Colonel Hutchins, of the Nicaraguan Rangers!"

I looked with interest at this soldier of fortune, famous in the troubled annals of the country. All believed him to be dead, and the place of his murder had been pointed out to me, in a lonely copse behind Juigalpa. I said as much, and he laughed.

"That was Guliero's second miss," he answered. "After the massacre of the rangers, I escaped. Jake was ill in Omatepec. Your mozo was then a brilliant aide-de-camp of Guardiola's, and he had a trifling grudge against me. Luckily, an Indian's gratitude is as strong as an Indian's hate, and if one enemy tracked me to kill, another followed to save. Major Gondijo, as he was called then, found me asleep under a tree, and he came mighty near to a successful murder. But the good Samaritan arrived in time."

"What was your quarrel with Guliero?" I asked, bluntly.

"I was a prisoner of his at El Sauce, and I saved a girl from the brute. That night Munoz attacked, and drove the Hondurans out of Segovia. In the rout I caught Gondijo, tied him up, and gave him fifty lashes. That girl's old father was the good Samaritan I spoke of."

In the jungle one is not free to choose one's comrades, nor is it either safe or practicable to travel alone with baggage. I joined company with Colonel Hutchins, who was on his way to Segovia. After some days he told me his business, and invited me to take part in it. That I could not do, but my warmest sympathies followed this terrible adventurer. Companion more delightful I never met, and nothing will persuade me that the deeds

of ferocity attributed to him are other than vile fictions.

It appears that the Indian, whose daughter he had saved, did not consider himself quits by nursing his benefactor. He imparted to him the secret of a fortune. "In the wildest district of Segovia," said he, "guided by such and such landmarks, you will find a mine of opals, pure water, not the yellow sort, called Honduran. I know it because my father told me, as his father told him. No white man has ever seen it. There is danger, but I cannot tell you of what sort."

At the time Colonel Hutchins dared not show himself by daylight through the five republics. But he never forgot the old Indian's secret, and, after many wanderings, he had ventured back at length.

After many days of pleasant travel, we parted on the lake shore, with promises of correspondence which were never fulfilled on either side. Some twelve months after, through my agents at San Juan del Norte, I received a curious package. Nothing more strangely beautiful have I ever beheld than the chip of stone enclosed. It was about as large as one's fist, clear as glass, but full of unearthly lights. Broad rays of colour, blue and orange and crimson, shot out of it, as from an enormous diamond—much less brilliant of course, but broader and steadier. I showed it to several jewel-merchants, who had seen small bits like it, but none to compare for size or beauty. This stone was lost in the burning of the Pantechnicon. No word accompanied it, but I had no doubt that Colonel Hutchins was the donor.

The other day, in Regent-street, I came face to face upon Jake, the small, crabbed Yankee who acted as the filibuster's servant. He hailed me as a friend in the wilderness, and from him I learned those details I am about to set before you. Jake is here on his master's account, and leaves by the next Royal Mail steamer.

After quitting me, the pair journeyed, without incident, to the lonely district pointed out. I am not at liberty to describe it further. There they sought landmarks among the bleak and barren hills of Segovia. After several days' search they were led to the foot of a rolling slope; miles long it was, sweeping with ridge and furrow half-way to the zenith. The short, fine grass upon it was burnt gray; under that sad tone inequalities of ground all vanished, and the hill seemed to roll in

one smooth sweep heavenward. There should have been a tree; but, for leagues about, not a sapling appeared. Nevertheless, the filibusters rode on and up, Jake grumbling and jeering at his master, who laughed. Suddenly, after half-an-hour's travel, he reined up and pointed. Far away to the left, behind a smooth swell of the innumerable hillocks, they saw a gap, and in it a darker shade of leaves.

"That set my blood dancing," said Jake.

They rode thither, and as they went the gap vanished and reappeared. But at each glimpse it grew wider. After many turns and windings they reached the kloof, as South Africans would call it. Hills swept up boldly on either side, turning suddenly to the right at a hundred yards' distance. All the space between was full of tangled shrubs. Horses could not enter; and it was late. They camped by the old tree which had fallen. During the night strange sounds arose, sighing and moaning of the wind in that narrow cleft.

At dawn they began exploring. A little stream ran through the bush. It was dry, and they used its bed. Going on, the jungle grew thicker. Big trunks of cotton-wood and mahogany crowded to the bank. So tall and so many they rose, the jungle became so dense, that the towering hills were quite lost. Master and servant debated whether to cut a track outwards and strike the sides of the gap. But they decided to keep on. Presently the stream led through real forest, dusky and shadowed. They walked in twilight, though the sun was high.

On a sudden, Hutchins threw himself back with a cry. On the low bank before him sat a spectre. For the instant even he was startled; then, laughingly, he struck the thing, and it toppled clashing down. A glittering ball pitched between Jake's feet. They sat down to examine it.

The thing was evidently a human skull, encrusted with turquoise, garnets, and gleaming black shale.* The latter substance, in tiny flakes, covered all the forehead and lower jaw. The eye-sockets were defined by a row of garnets, uncut. From ear to ear, widening at the cheek-bones, stretched a band of turquoise, excellent of colour, but badly flawed. The lips were marked with garnets, and the wide gaping mouth was filled with them. All the rest of the face had the black, shiny

* Two skulls thus ornamented may be seen in the Christy Collection at Victoria-street. But the eyes have as yet defied all analysis.

hue of jet. A few ragged teeth remained in the jaw.

It was the eyes of this extraordinary mask which had startled Hutchins. Huge white opals they were, in which a gleaming red spark played devilishly. Jake was half frightened, even now, with the ghastly object in his lap.

It had stood upon a skeleton, rudely fashioned of white wood, so old and rotten that the filibuster's blow had almost knocked it into powder. One outstretched arm fell into the stream-bed.

A few feet of clear ground there were where this thing had been set up. After examining all the neighbourhood, the adventurers took their breakfast there, silent and thoughtful. The pipe lit in meditation, Hutchins said at length—according to Jake's report—"Hev' yer marked anything extror'nary, sergeant, beside that preparation of bones?"

"I hev, sir!" answered Jake.

"What mout that be now?" continued the master.

"I've marked a creek, kurnul, as is a miracle!"

"A fairish show o' water ran in it last night, eh?"

"That's so! And now nary drain."

"An' what do your experience make o' that?"

"May-be there's beavers here; if not, there's human Ind'ans can build a dam."

Whilst finishing their pipes, they silently thought the situation over. Such woodsmen do not require to consult before a simple danger like this. Neither seems to have once entertained the idea of returning. Said Hutchins, when they rose: "I guess the land rises towards the other side?"

"I guess so!" answered Jake.

So he slung the skull behind him, and they took machetes in hand to cut through the wood at right angles, away from the stream.

About an hour and a half of steady progress brought them to the edge. No trace of people or of cultivation did they find. But the hill rose a sheer cliff, as high as they could see for leaves. They followed a long cutting. Gradually the hill lowered; but presently Hutchins nearly pitched into a very deep barranca, or gully, which ran across the valley and split the cliff. Its straight sides effectually stopped them. Again the pair took a mouthful of Bourbon and lit the reflective pipe.

"There's three ways in this matter,"

said Hutchins, as Jake reports. "We may track the barranca down, an' that's my idee; or we may strike for the other side, crossing the water agin; or we may risk that mirac'lous stream. It's bound to cross the ditch, I take it."

"I guess so. If it come from these hills, 'twould run like Niagara rapids."

"Ay; but them beavers will have made their dam at the crossing, I should opine. 'Twould be easy to wash a man into that crack."

"That's how it strikes me, kurnul. Let's be walking!"

They followed the barranca. Opals were all forgotten by this time. It had come to a match between these wild fellows and a "drove of Ind'ans," as Jake put it. He watched, rifle in hand, whilst Hutchins cut.

After two hours' heavy toil, straight across the kloof, the ground began to rise again. They had passed the water-shed; the barranca grew perceptibly more shallow. Presently, they struck the channel of the stream, running parallel to it. Hutchins paused. "It's death ahead, Jake!" he muttered: and they turned back, examining each foot of the steep barranca. Nowhere was it practicable. So, at length, they reached the bordering cliff again, from which they had set out. "Up yonder we might see a something!" said Jake. Where the crevasse parted it, the rock was but twenty to twenty-five feet high; with a young cotton-tree reared against it they reached the top.

On one hand lay a confusion of hills, one above another, interlacing and winding about. On the other stretched the kloof, probably a mile wide at this point and full of jungle. Across the barranca trees grew equally thick, but practised eyes could not be mistaken; clearings or savannah lay beyond a narrow belt of forest. Then the filibusters looked down. Right beneath them, masked from sight of people in the valley, an easy crossing lay, scarcely six feet from the edge of the cliff; an inch or two of rock gave foothold to reach the path. They hastily descended by their tree; hanging roots in abundance enabled them to swing round the corner. Triumphant they stood at the head of the crossing.

But much time had been spent in these explorations, and sunset drew on. They resolved to camp on the bare cliff. As well light a fire as not, since the Indians knew their presence. They chose a place somewhat sheltered from the bitter wind

that plays at nightfall over those hills. Hutchins took first watch till midnight, and just as he rose to call Jake, a roar of water came down the valley. Jake started, listened, and took share in the silent laugh of his master.

"Them beavers has miscalculated their dam-work!" he chuckled.

"It's Nicaraguan Rangers they mis-took!" Hutchins replied. "We've begun fair, Jake. Don't let's spoil the game by losing our scalps."

But the long black night passed quietly. Wailing cries arose, such as they had heard before, and they knew by this time that the wind did not cause them. But dawn appeared without incident, and the filibusters rose, shivering. They took a mouthful of Bourbon, descended to the dewy brake, and swung round the corner of the cliff.

"Kurnul!" said Jake, as he followed down the path, "I kinder think that if you commanded the rangers still, Henningsen would have you broke for want o' strategic science."

"You mean we should have crossed last night?"

"Well, kurnul, this is a made roadway, if ever there was one. It's rough an' it's old, but it's human. If them Ind'ans has broke it down on the fur side, I guess they'll have the larf of us!"

It took them but a quarter of an hour to reach the bottom and climb the other rise. All this time they were hidden under scrub bushes, and such soft-wood trees as papaw. Jake's suspicion proved correct. All the path had been cut away two feet from the top, and they found themselves face to face with a cliff as steep as that on the other side. On either hand the earth sloped down, and, to make all sure, a strong abattis had been built along the crest. It was not needful. The filibusters, aghast, recognised their case as hopeless, and after five minutes' silent contemplation, they turned about.

"We'll try the stream," muttered Hutchins, "provided, Jake, they've not cut off our retreat. Any how, it's one to score for the Indians!"

It was two to score. For, on regaining the other end of the causeway, they found the hanging roots all cut. Nothing that walks, save a bird or a mouse, could have passed round the cliff. The filibusters looked, and uttered each a low whistle.

"How's the larder?" asked Hutchins, immediately.

Jake reported charqui for two days' consumption, and, said he, "There's living things in this ditch, sure. What devilment d'yer guess there mout be a waitin' for us up at the other end, whar' the crack shallows?"

They started at top speed to see, for the bursting of the dam last night must have injured the fortifications, if, as they supposed, it had flooded the crevasse. Heedless of stinging ants and snakes, they hurried on, slipping on loose stones, falling over roots and bushes. Very soon they found water, stagnant, but flaked with brown foam. It grew deeper and broader as the pair splashed on recklessly. This could be nothing but the overflow of last night. Then, by the increasing height and density of the bush, they knew the barranca was shallowing; the vegetation in it could reach the sun.

Then a wailing clamour rose on either bank, and encouraged the weary men to greater exertions. They did not fear attack in the middle of the barranca; but the flood grew too deep for wading amongst so many obstacles as it concealed. They had to skirt it warily, for there were spots where a strong archer might have struck them. The banks became so low that a stout climb would have taken them out, but it was too probable that the Indians lay in force along its crest. They pressed to the main breach.

It opened on them suddenly, a slope covered with wet mud and rubbish just washed down. The water had but lately ceased flowing. Upon the top a score of naked Indians toiled feverishly at a breastwork. Two or three chiefs in glittering array hurried back and forward, their feather ornaments aglow in the broken sunlight. At sight of the filibusters all stood aghast; then, throwing up their arms, they fled. A single arrow was shot, which lodged in Jake's holster. He fired over the Indians' heads as they vanished among the trees.

Cautiously Hutchins led the way up. The breastwork had been intended for defence, though it could easily be turned on both sides. But the Indians' hearts had failed them. Traces of the flood were more conspicuous on the top. It had poured down from the right with tremendous violence, washing bushes and timber into the crevasse.

"As near a thing, Jake, as either of us has come to," said Hutchins, looking down the slope. "Now, we'll skirmish into the

wood, if you've picked the garrapatas from your skin."

"Strategy says, look to yer rear, but you'll never larn strategy, kurnul. S'pose we was to see what's going on by the creek?"

Following the flood's course, they reached the stream, which had almost shrunk to its bed. Such signs were there as showed them that the dam was an old system of defence. Reassured in this direction, the filibusters looked to their arms, and prepared to skirmish on. But in the shadow of the wood an Indian appeared. His head-dress was of dazzling green feathers, with long streamers pendant—tail-plumes of the quetzal bird; a feather collar, scarlet and blue, in neat, delicate patterns, encircled his neck; the ends of his white cummerbund almost swept the earth, and they were superbly adorned with crests of humming-bird. Boldly enough he came out; but his whole body shook with fear or rage. Two boys followed in agony visible—one carrying a bow and arrows, the other a feather bag. Leaning on their rifles, the filibusters waited. At ten yards' distance the Indian stood; he took the bow and pouch from his attendants, and held them out, with significant signs.

"It's capitulation in form," said Hutchins, and signalled to open the pouch. This one of the boys did, exhibiting a heap of golden ornaments and some nondescript matters, prized apparently by these savages. Hutchins shook his head, and pointed to the opal eyes of the skull which Jake carried behind him. The Indian seemed wild with horror at that sight, but he understood. One of the boys ran back. He was half an hour absent; and, in the meanwhile, Hutchins established quite friendly relations with the chief. Ostentatiously leaving his gun with Jake, he approached with that universal peacemaker—a flask of spirits. At first the Indian refused, then he sipped, and then drank freely. It was Hutchins's conviction that he had tasted fire-water before. Under the friendly feelings thus produced, he exchanged his beautiful collar for a machete or wood-knife; but the boy, squatting behind him, whiskeyless, could not overcome his horror and affright.

The messenger returned with another bag, exquisitely adorned with feathers. Approaching gingerly, he poured out its contents—a heap of opals. Most of them were clear as glass, like the one Hutchins

sent me, but even bigger; some were white as milk, but colourless; others, full of fire, but golden—Honduras opals, in fact. A number, however, might have vied with the grandest gems that come to us from Hungary. The filibusters were dazzled. In the mass shone one big emerald, full of flaws, but three inches square. There was also a great heap of turquoise.

Hutchins gravely put back all the pebbles into the bag, laid his hand upon his heart, and pointed down the valley. The chief placed his fingers on his lips, to indicate secrecy, and the filibusters did likewise. They gave the Indian both their machetes, their flask, and a few coins for ornament; then, with deep bowings on either side, departed. The chief followed them at a distance. An hour's walk by the stream brought them to the head of the kloof, where their horses and baggage should have been. They had vanished, but the Indian signalled comfort, and in a few minutes the boys appeared round a neighbouring hillock, with the missing animals and all their traps. Evidently there was an easier exit from the Indian territory, by which these boys had passed.

Hutchins selected what things he could best spare, and gave them to the chief, who withdrew to a distance, and the filibusters mounted. Loyally they rode away, and no human being has heard that adventure, until Jake told it me the other evening. Don't be in haste to pronounce it impossible. The waste lands of Central America contain hundreds of such Indian communities, not to be approached by white men. Many of them have a quaint civilisation. In Costa Rica I may name the Talamancas and Pranzos; in Nicaragua the Woolwas, Ramas, and Guatusos; in San Salvador the Indians of the Balsam coast; in Guatemala, the Lacandones, the Petens, and a score of others—above all, the famous people of the Itzimaya.

THE BOOK OF THE PLAY.

MR. THACKERAY has described a memorable performance at the Theatre Royal, Chatteries. Arthur Pendennis and his young friend Harry Foker were among the audience; Lieutenants Rodgers and Podgers, and Cornet Tidmus, of the Dragoons, occupied a private-box. The play was *The Stranger*. Bingley, the manager, appeared as the hero of that

sombre work; Mrs. Haller was impersonated by Miss Fotheringay. "I think ye'll like Miss Fotheringay in Mrs. Haller, or me name's not Jack Costigan," observed the father of the actress. Bingley, we are told, was great in the character of the Stranger, and wore the tight pantaloons and Hessian boots which stage tradition has duly prescribed as the costume of that doleful personage. He had the stage jewellery on, too, selecting "the largest and most shining rings for himself, and allowing his little finger to quiver out of his cloak, with a sham diamond-ring covering the first joint of the finger, and twiddling it in the faces of the pit." Bingley fancied the world was fascinated by its glitter.

And he read out of that stage-book—the genuine and old-established "book of the play"—that wonderful volume, "which is not bound like any other book in the world, but is rouged and tawdry like the hero or heroine who holds it; and who holds it as people never do hold books: and points with his finger to a passage, and wags his head ominously at the audience, and then lifts up eyes and finger to the ceiling, professing to derive some intense consolation from the work between which and heaven there is a strong affinity. Any one," proceeds the author of Pendennis, "who has ever seen one of our great light comedians X. in a chintz dressing-gown, such as nobody ever wore, and representing himself as a young nobleman in his apartments, and whiling away the time with light literature, until his friend Sir Harry shall arrive, or his father shall come down to breakfast—anybody, I say, who has seen the great X. over a sham book, has indeed had a great pleasure, and an abiding matter for thought."

The Stranger reads from morning to night, as his servant Francis reports of him. When he bestows a purse upon the aged Tobias, that he may be enabled to purchase his only son's discharge from the army, he first sends away Francis with the stage-book, that there may be no witness of the benevolent deed. "Here, take this book, and lay it on my desk," says the Stranger; and the stage direction runs: "Francis goes into the lodge with the book." Bingley, it is stated, marked the page carefully, so that he might continue the perusal of the volume off the stage if he liked. Two acts later, and the Stranger is again to be beheld, "on a seat, reading." But after that he has to put

from him his precious book, for the more stirring incidents of the drama demand his very serious attention.

Dismissed from the Stranger, however, the stage-book probably re-appears in the afterpiece. In how many dramatic works figures this useful property—the “book of the play?” Shakespeare has by no means disdained its use. Imogen is discovered reading in her bed in the second act of *Cymbeline*. She inquires the hour of the lady in attendance:

Almost midnight, madam.

Imogen. I have read three hours, then; mine eyes are weak.

Fold down the leaf where I have left! To bed!

By-and-by, when Iachimo steals from his trunk to “note the chamber,” he observes the book, examines it, and proclaims its nature:

She hath been reading late

The tale of *Tereus*! here’s the leaf turned down
Where *Philomel* gave up.

Brutus reads within his tent:

Let me see, let me see; is not the leaf turned down
Where I left reading? Here it is, I think.
How ill this taper burns! Ha! Who comes here?

And thereupon enters the ghost of *Cæsar*, and appoints that celebrated meeting at *Philippi*.

In the third act of the Third Part of *King Henry the Sixth*, that monarch enters, “disguised, with a prayer-book.” Further on, when a prisoner in the Tower, he is “discovered sitting with a book in his hand, the Lieutenant attending;” when Gloucester enters, abruptly dismisses the Lieutenant, and forthwith proceeds to the assassination of the king.

But Gloucester himself is by-and-by to have dealings with the book of the play. In the seventh scene of the third act of *King Richard the Third*, a stage direction runs: “Enter Gloucester in a gallery above, between two bishops. Whereupon the lord mayor, who has come with divers aldermen and citizens, to beseech the duke to accept the crown of England, observes:

See where his grace stands ’tween two clergymen!

Says Buckingham:

Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
To stay him from the fall of vanity;
And, see, a book of prayer in his hand;
True ornaments to know a holy man.

The mayor and citizens departing, Gloucester, in Cibber’s acting version of the tragedy, was wont wildly to toss his prayer-book in the air. Here is an apposite note from John Taylor’s *Records of my Life*, relative to Garrick’s method of

accomplishing this piece of stage business: “My father, who saw him perform *King Richard* on the first night of his appearance at Goodman’s Fields, told me that the audience were particularly struck with his manner of throwing away the book when the lord mayor and aldermen had retired, as it manifested a spirit totally different from the solemn dignity which characterised the former old school, and which his natural acting wholly overturned.”

A certain antiquary, when Kemble first assumed the part of *Richard*, took objection to the prayer-book he affected to read in this scene. “This book,” writes Boaden, “for aught I know the ‘Secret History of the Green-Room,’ which Kemble took from the property-man before he went on, our exact friend said should have been some illuminated missal. This was somewhat risible, because one would suppose the heart of the actor skirr away so precious a relic of the dark ages, as if, like Careless, in the *School for Scandal*, he would willingly ‘knock down the mayor and aldermen.’”

There is a stage-book in *King Henry the Eighth*. The Duke of Norfolk, in the second act, “opens a folding-door; the king is discovered sitting and reading pensively.” The book of *Prospero* is spoken of, but not seen. In *Hamlet* the stage-book plays an important part. Says Polonius to Ophelia, when he and Claudius would be “lawful espials” of her meeting with *Hamlet*:

Read on this book,

That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.

The book is now usually a missal which the lady employs at her orisons. But it is oftentimes—for so stage-management will have it—the identical volume with which *Hamlet* had entered reading in an earlier act, and which he describes, upon being interrogated by Polonius, as containing, “words, words, words,” and “slanders, sir.” It was John Kemble’s way, we are told, to tear out a leaf from the book at this period of the performance, by way of conveying “the stronger impression of *Hamlet*’s wildness.” The actor’s method of rendering this scene has not been adopted by later representatives of the past character. Indeed, a long run of the tragedy, such as happens in these times, would involve serious outlay for stage-books, if so destructive a system were persisted in. Moreover, there is no sort of warrant in

the text for tearing a leaf out of the "satirical ~~rogue's~~" work.

The "book of the play" frequently figures in theatrical anecdote. Wilkinson relates, that when Reddish made his first essay upon the stage, he inserted a paragraph in the newspapers, informing the public that he was "a gentleman of easy fortune." He appeared as Sir John Dorilant, in *The School for Lovers*, and in the course of his performance threw from him an elegantly-bound book, which he was supposed to have been studying. Observing this, a gentleman in the pit inquired of Macklin, who happened to be present: "Pray, sir, do you think such conduct natural?" "Why, no, sir," Macklin replied, gravely, "not in a Sir John Dorilant, but strictly natural as Mr. Reddish; for, as you know, he has advertised himself as a gentleman of easy fortune." It has been pointed out, however, that the inaccuracy, fatal to so many anecdotes, affects even this one. The book is thrown away in strict accordance with the stage directions of the play; and it is so treated, not by Sir John Dorilant, but by another character named Belmont.

In Farquhar's comedy of *The Inconstant*, when Bizarre is first addressed by Mirabel and Duretête, Miss Farren, playing Bizarre, held a book in her hand, which she affected to have been reading before she spoke. Mrs. Jordan, we are told, who afterwards assumed the character, declined to make use of the stage-book, and dispensed with it altogether. She sat perfectly still, affecting to be lost in thought. Then, before speaking, she took a pinch of snuff! Half a century ago a heroine who indulged in snuff was deemed no more objectionable than is one of our modern heroes of the stage, who cannot forego cigars or cigarettes.

There is a stage-book to be seen in *The School for Scandal*. Joseph Surface affects to pore over its pages immediately after he has secreted Lady Teazle behind the screen, and while Sir Peter is on the stairs. "Ever improving himself," notes Sir Peter, and then pats the reader on the shoulder. Joseph starts. "I have been dozing over a stupid book," he says; and the stage direction bids him "gape, and throw down the book." And many volumes are needed in *The Rivals*. Miss Languish's maid Lucy returns after having traversed half the town, and visited all the circulating libraries in Bath. She has failed to obtain *The Reward of*

Constancy; *The Fatal Connexion*; *The Mistakes of the Heart*; *The Delicate Distress*, or the *Memoirs of Lady Woodford*. But she has secured, as she says, "taking the books from under her cloak, and from her pockets": "*The Gordian Knot* and *Peregrine Pickle*. Here are *The Tears of Sensibility* and *Humphrey Clinker*. This, *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*, written by herself; and here the second volume of *The Sentimental Journey*."

Lydia. Heigh-ho! What are those books by the glass?

Lucy. The great one is only *The Whole Duty of Man*, where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

Lydia. Very well; give me the sal volatile.

Lucy. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

Lydia. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

Lucy. Oh, the drops! Here, ma'am.

Presently the approach of Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony Absolute is announced. Cries Lydia: "Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick. Fling *Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet; throw *Roderick Random* into the closet; thrust *Lord Ainsworth* under the sofa; cram *Ovid* behind the bolster; there, put *The Man of Feeling* into your pocket—so, so—now lay Mrs. Chapone in sight, and leave *Fordyce's Sermons* open on the table."

Lucy. O, burn it, ma'am! The hairdresser has torn away as far as *Proper Pride*.

Lydia. Never mind; open at *Sobriety*. Fling me *Lord Chesterfield's Letters*. Now for 'em!

It will be perceived that the property-master of the theatre is here required to produce quite a library of stage-books. Does he buy them by the dozen, from the nearest bookstall; out of that trunk full of miscellaneous volumes, boldly labelled, "All these at fourpence?" And does he then re-cover them with the bright blue or scarlet that is so dear to him, daubing them here and there with his indispensable Dutch metal? Of course their contents can matter little. Like all the other things of the theatre, they are not what they pretend to be; nor what they would have the audience think them. The "book of the play" is something of a mystery. Let us take for granted, however, that it is rarely interesting to the reader, that it is not one of those volumes which, when once taken up, cannot again be laid down—which thrill, enchain, and absorb. For otherwise what might happen? When some necessary question of the play had to be considered, the actor, over-occupied with the volume in his hand, fairly tied

and bound by its chain of interest, might forget his part—the book might ruin the play. Of course such an accident could not be permitted. The stage-book is bound to be a dull book, however much it may seem to entertain Brutus and Henry, The Stranger and Bizarre, Hamlet and Joseph Surface, Imogen and Lydia Languish. It is, in truth, a book for all stage-readers. And now it is a prayer-book—as in the case of Richard the Third; and now, in *The Hunchback*, it is Ovid's *Art of Love*. According to the prompt-book of the play, Modus is to enter "with a neatly-bound book."

Helen. What is the book?

Modus. 'Tis Ovid's *Art of Love*.

Helen. That Ovid was a fool.

Modus. In what?

Helen. In that,

To call that thing an art which art is none.

She strikes the book from his hand, and reproves him for reading in presence of a lady.

Modus. Right you say,

And well you served me, cousin, so to strike
The volume from my hand. I own my fault:
So please you—may I pick it up again?
I'll put it in my pocket!

It is the misfortune of the "book of the play" to be much maltreated by the *dramatis personæ*. It is now flung away, now torn, now struck to earth; the property-master, it may be, watching its fate from the side-wings—anxious not so much because of its contents or intrinsic value, as on account of the gaudy cover his art has supplied it with, and the pains he must take to repair any injuries it may receive in the course of performance.

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,
AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK III. WIDOW AND MOTHER. CHAPTER V.
"I PROMISE."

It would be profitless and little edifying to inquire too narrowly into what Geoffrey Dale had been doing, in the interval between his departure from Mount Kiera Lodge and his surreptitious visit to Miss Pemberton. The lives of adventurers, whether in a large or a small way, of that which they call by the honest name "business," are not pleasant to contemplate; their shifts and resources are of the kind that it is better only to glance at and pass by.

To Geoffrey Dale the course of life merely meant the evolution of "luck." He believed in no higher providence; he

lived according to no more certain law. Sometimes luck had been on his side, sometimes against him—notably the latter, just before he started on that coach-journey with Edward Randall; but he counted that the result of it had picked him up very considerably. The story of his experience since he had been sent out to the colonies by an uncle—his only surviving relative, whose most ardent desire with respect to him was to get conclusively rid of him—was one of vicissitude of fortune, including experiments of every kind, except that of honest and sustained exertion. Geoffrey Dale would not work if he could help it, and he generally contrived to elude the necessity by shifts which had their cleverness no doubt, but whose efficacy was only temporary. Gambling was the generic name for them all. It had brought him very low indeed occasionally, and it had never given him any of the extraordinary chances which it affords to some men, whereby they are pitched out of a troubled sea of impecuniosity upon a pleasant shore of solvency and ease. Geoffrey Dale believed in such chances, and even thought at times that if one of them were to come in his way he would not risk its stability, but become respectable, and keep so. Not that he did not know that "Qui a bu, boira;" but then, under comfortable circumstances of the kind indicated, he who drank deeply before would content himself with safe and modest draughts, indeed mere sippings of the treacherous cup.

Once or twice Geoffrey Dale had been very near such a piece of good fortune, in the aggravating position of the jockey who just loses a race, or the archer who just misses the centre of the inner ring; and who is proportionably exacerbated by his failure, and stimulated by the nearness of the miss to try again and again. He had never gone so far outside the boundary of what his discretion dictated as safe practice, as in the transactions at Mount Kiera Lodge; but then he had never been reduced to such straits, nor had so easy an opportunity offered itself to him before.

Mr. Dale was at this period of his career anything but an example of the moral reading-book description. Not only had his ill-gotten gains prospered in his hands, but he had so worked on the basis of the sum with which he returned to Sydney, that he had lived since then with all external respectability, and carefully avoided the companions of the looser

sort with whom he had previously been familiar. If, indeed, any of his former associates had inquired for him at his present abode by the name of Geoffrey Dale, they would have been told that the gentleman who occupied the neat lodgings in which he had established himself was not so named. What he called himself during his stay at Sydney is none of our present business; our concern is with his change of plans after he left John Pemberton's hospitable house, and the motive which induced him to prolong his stay in the colonial capital.

Geoffrey Dale's change of plan dated from the day on which he read the announcement of John Pemberton's death in the Sydney Herald; and the motive of it was a resolution not to lose sight of John Pemberton's daughter.

He had intended to return to England. He was tired of what he called his ill-luck in the colonies, and he was by no means certain that his uncle had quite conclusively meant what he said when he assured him, at their farewell interview, that the far from liberal sum with which he was then "starting" his nephew, included the very last shilling he should ever have from him. It is not difficult, when one is at the other end of the world, to believe that people at this end are more indulgently disposed towards one than they really are; and Geoffrey Dale had done so many worse things on the far side, than those with which his uncle had become acquainted on the near, that he might with some reason regard his earlier career as comparatively harmless.

But, with the reading of the brief line in the newspaper, a new idea presented itself to Geoffrey Dale. In writing the note which Ida found in her music-book, and inducing the inexperienced girl to write to him, he had had no set purpose beyond the malicious one of doing something which would annoy Mrs. Pemberton, and no distinct object in view of an interested nature. He admired the pretty girl, who was so unsophisticated and so self-willed; and he thought it would be a pleasant enough solution of the precariousness of his position to become the son-in-law of the "good Samaritan," especially as that prosperous gentleman meditated a return to England. But the best of Samaritans would make inquiry before he permitted his only daughter to marry a stranger, who, however brilliantly and successfully he might

draw upon his imagination for the facts of his origin and his previous history, must needs tell the truth about his pecuniary circumstances. And then, the Samaritan's wife suspected and disliked Mr. Dale, and he was too wise to make any mistake about the importance and weight of that element in the case. Mrs. Pemberton could do anything with her husband, and, if Geoffrey Dale were to intrude himself into their lives again, she would assuredly balk his attempt to regain a footing there.

It was therefore partly from a mere reckless inclination to do mischief, and partly because it was just possible the Samaritan might be made useful to him in the future, that Geoffrey Dale had set the trap for Ida. He was surprised, rather nettled, perhaps, that she did not walk into it so soon as he expected, but he was speedily compensated for this small mortification.

Ida Pemberton, as the heiress of the Samaritan's wealth—with no one to make inquiries, or interfere, except a step-mother, from whom it might be easy to detach her liking and her confidence; easy, that is to say, for a man with whom she was very near to fancying herself in love—assumed a very different position in Mr. Dale's estimation. He could defy Mrs. Pemberton's enmity, if he should seriously contemplate attempting such a coup as winning the hand of John Pemberton's daughter, for she could have no power except such as he could undermine; and whereas she had nothing but a prejudice and a suspicion to advance against him—the one as baseless as the other was contemptible, he could easily make it appear—he had facts to produce in evidence against her, of which she would not lightly risk the revelation. He had seen her tears, he had heard her words as she knelt beside the unconscious guest whose presence had cost her so dear; and he had put upon both tears and words the sort of interpretation which comes readily to such men as Geoffrey Dale. That Mary had told her husband of her previous acquaintance with Edward Randall did not affect his view in the least. That was either audacity or calculation—Randall might have let out the fact in his delirium. His own case was unassailable. He could either defy Ida's step-mother, or make a bargain with her according to circumstances; but the first object to be gained was the securing of Ida's confidence, the strengthening of the "great

friend" position he had taken up. Needless to say, he succeeded in that; but, in certain troublesome ways, Ida's simplicity baffled him. She answered his letters, she appreciated his sympathy, she allowed herself to be influenced by his hints, and guided by his advice; but she did not tell him anything about her father's will, and she gave him—in explanation of the delay in the return to England, which had been decided upon—merely vague statements respecting Mrs. Pemberton's health. When Mrs. Pemberton was strong enough, they were to go. That was all Ida ever said. Now, Geoffrey Dale had grown tired of this uncertainty. Certain little speculations, in which he had been engaged, had not turned out quite so well as he expected; and he resolved to set about the larger one without more loss of time. Ida would tell him particulars which it would never occur to her to write. He would see her, test his power over her, make sure of his conquest, or see at once that his luck was against him in that quarter also; and, in the former case, bring the question between himself and Mrs. Pemberton, of battle or bargain, to an issue without delay. He had nothing to lose in the game he proposed to play—and the game was well worth the winning.

Mr. Dale was so completely unprepared for the news which Ida had to tell him, that it almost threw him off his guard. Mrs. Pemberton had become an adversary of far more importance than he had calculated upon, and the hazards had increased very materially. On the other hand, Ida was much more charming than he had imagined her. Mr. Dale felt that if he had been in a position to indulge in the luxury of falling in love, he might have fallen in love with Miss Pemberton, without any regard being had to the expediency of the sentiment.

He was not sorry for the interruption which had cut short his interview with Ida. He wanted time to think over the changed aspect of affairs. As he walked away from Mount Kiera Lodge, in the direction of the wayside inn where he had secured a lodging, he thought with satisfaction on only one aspect of their interview. Ida Pemberton liked him quite well enough to be easily persuaded to love him, if he choose to persuade her. There was a consciousness in her looks and manner which assured him on that point; and, as he had no clue to its origin in Mrs. Pemberton's suspicious question-

ing, he was justified in scoring it up to his own advantage.

Would she obey his injunction to keep their meeting a secret from Mrs. Pemberton? This would not be a bad test of the extent of his influence over her.

On the morrow Geoffrey Dale again went to Mount Kiera Lodge, and again, without presenting himself at the house, took his way to the spot at which Ida had joined him on the preceding day. It was just beyond a bend in the wide, well-kept path, through the shrubbery, where a garden-seat was placed under the shelter of a tree, and well back from the path. Ida was waiting for her visitor, and looking even better than she had looked the day before, for she was very becomingly agitated, and the trouble in her brown eyes brightened them.

Miss Pemberton rose from the garden-seat, and gave Mr. Dale her hand, which he retained a little longer than he had ventured to do the day before, while he thanked her for her punctuality, and inquired for Mrs. Pemberton. He was totally unembarrassed, and carried out perfectly his purpose of depriving the unusual step which he had induced Ida to take of any seeming strangeness. Ida answered him shyly, and said, as they walked on together:

"I—I did not tell Mrs. Pemberton you had come, because you told me it might harm her to be annoyed about anything. But I—I don't think it is quite right; it makes me uncomfortable; and I—I wish I might tell her."

Ida had been ready enough to write to Mr. Dale without anybody's knowledge—there was nothing embarrassing or confusing in that, he and she had become such "great friends" in a few days' acquaintance—but it was a different thing to find herself involved in a clandestine interview with this man, who seemed to regard her now in a different light, whose eyes spoke quite another language—a language until that moment all unknown to Ida, but to which something in her own heart (or imagination, was it?) gave her the key.

"It is a necessity of your position," said Mr. Dale, soothingly. "Of course she must know, when it cannot harm her to cross her unreasonable, I may say unjust, prejudices. But may we not forget them and her for the moment, and think only of ourselves, of this brief meeting, and of the future that lies before

us? I will not distress you by asking you to receive me in this way again; I will trust to your courage, and justice, and kindness, to defy and defeat, as you have already done, all efforts to forbid our friendship."

"Thank you," said Ida, frankly; "I think that will be best."

"But you will let me stay awhile now?" said Mr. Dale; and Ida assented. They walked on, completely out of sight of the house; they passed through a gate which gave admittance to a small nursery-ground which John Pemberton had taken great interest in, and where he had reared many a plant which was to make a goodly show in the far-away England of his constant dreams; but which had fallen into neglect of late. It was quite deserted now; Geoffrey Dale and Ida had it all to themselves.

The conversation was long and animated; and, on Ida's side, perfectly frank. She did not, perhaps, learn a great deal about Mr. Dale, though he made a great show of expansiveness; but she derived a general notion that he was going to be immensely influenced by her for the future; that he lamented many wasted opportunities; and that on his return to England he would start on a career of distinction. To what particular avocation he proposed to devote himself he did not mention, nor did he account for his present unsettled condition otherwise than by talking about his "restlessness" and "love of change," and how his "guardian" had allowed him to gratify his fancy for seeing the far ends of the earth. In fact, he merely deepened the colours, and filled in the outlines of the fancy sketch of himself which he had drawn for Ida in the first days of their acquaintance; but she took it all for a history as full as it was authentic, and was perfectly satisfied.

She especially admired, in her own softened state of feeling, the manner in which Mr. Dale spoke of Mrs. Pemberton. He was fully in possession of what had passed between Ida and her step-mother with respect to himself, except the embarrassing suggestion as to a possible transmutation of the friend into the lover, and he discussed it in a mild and generous mood.

"No doubt," he said, "poor Randall took some delusion into his head, in his fatal illness, about me, and imparted it to her; and she believed it. She is the sort of woman to stick to a notion if she once took it up, and I can excuse her in this

case. Unfortunately what I know about her is no delusion; but let us never allude to that again, except under strong necessity. As to her saying that your father shared her ill opinion of me, that is quite untrue."

"I contradicted her flatly when she said it."

"I thank you most heartily that you did so on impulse, on trust. It was just like your sweet generous self. And you had ample grounds for contradicting Mrs. Pemberton. Your father and I parted perfectly good friends."

"She made me promise—at least, not exactly—she wanted me to promise, and though I said nothing, I think she takes it for granted that I have promised—to tell her when you intend to go to England. I think she had some apprehension that you might be in the same ship with us, for she said something about not meeting you."

"Indeed! That is very odd, for, do you know"—here he paused and directed an inquiring glance towards Ida's face, but her eyes were downcast—"I had precisely that intention, subject to your approval, and permission."

"Permission!" she exclaimed, looking up hastily. "I—I could not have objected, but Mrs. Pemberton——"

"Would object very strongly, of course. But look at the advantages of my doing this very thing. I don't want to be your step-mother's victorious enemy, though your staunchness would make me so. I want to be her friend—I want to disarm her prejudices. And how could I ever have such an opportunity?"

"But," remonstrated Ida, frightened at the audacity of the notion, "she would not sail in the same ship with you."

"Not if she knew it. But if she did not? She could not, without making things very unpleasant, ignore your friend under such circumstances, and I should have a fair chance of conquering a foolish prepossession."

"But it could not be; you forget I am bound to tell her."

"No, indeed, you are not. Your promise was only taken for granted. At all events you shall not have to break it. I shall tell you nothing, and you shall only tell me, as soon as you know it, the name of your ship."

"Ah, that is only a compromise," said Ida, "and it would be a very serious thing to do."

"Serious! not at all! On the contrary,

it would be a capital joke." But Ida shook her head; she could not see anything of a jocose character in the notion; though she allowed him to perceive that she felt, if he could be her fellow-traveller, the voyage would be relieved of much of its anticipated ennui.

Mr. Dale then judiciously allowed the subject to drop, feeling sure that Ida would do as he wished with respect to keeping him informed of her own movements, and refraining from enlightening Mrs. Pemberton as to his. He led the conversation to other topics; to Ida's notions of what her life in England was to be like, and to his own associations with that country. The time passed away very pleasantly for Ida, who had quite persuaded herself that it was only on Mrs. Pemberton's own account she would hesitate to inform her of Geoffrey Dale's visit. She enjoyed his society, she liked him more and more. How very dull and uninteresting her life would be if this delightful friendship were gone out of it; and how certain she felt that no one with whom she should become acquainted in England could ever be so pleasant a companion as Mr. Dale. Besides, no one could be to her what he was, because no one else would be associated with the past; he only would have known her old home and her father.

No stroke of the intrusive bell came on this occasion to summon Ida, and the conversation prolonged itself until Mr. Dale was aroused to the necessity of bringing it to a close. He was satisfied with its results. If it should suit him to ask Ida Pemberton for her heart and hand, he felt pretty certain that she would not refuse them.

He was not wholly hardened and mercenary in his reflections when he had left her. Though he had let himself down into very low depths of scoundrelism, it was not exclusively in the light of a probable victim that he contemplated Ida. He could bring himself to lead a respectable life, he thought, with that pretty creature—who, though quite ignorant of life, was not at all stupid—for his wife. He never should have any temptation to be unkind to her. Indeed, he proposed to himself, and answered in the affirmative, that

fairest of test questions in such a case as his: "If I did not want money so imperatively, the thing would be impossible; and if she had not any, or a chance of any, would I marry her?"

"I suppose I had better not come again?" Mr. Dale said to Ida, when he was about to take leave of her.

"I suppose not," she replied, with visible reluctance, "unless I could tell Mrs. Pemberton."

"Impossible at present. This, then, must be good-bye until we meet—in England, is it to be?"

He smiled, and she knew he had not relinquished the intention of sailing in the same ship with her step-mother and herself.

"I believe we shall be at an hotel at Sydney for a few days before we sail," said Ida. "Mrs. Pemberton means to send a number of things out of the house to England—they are to be sent in another ship; and she has business to settle with Mr. Meredith. I will let you know, unless you leave sooner, all about it, when I know myself."

"You will write to me soon?"

"Yes, soon. And to the same address, I suppose?"

"To the same address. And you will hold firmly to our pact of friendship; you will let no one—for no one has the right—come between us? Promise me."

Her hand was trembling slightly as it rested on his arm, and there was trouble in her downcast face.

"I promise," she said.

He thanked her rapturously, and they parted. Again fortune favoured Mr. Dale; his coming to and going from Mount Kiera Lodge were unnoticed by anyone about the place.

Ida betook herself for a while to Dick's society. She talked to him, she fed him, she stroked him; but her mind was absent, and she suspected that Dick knew it. He rubbed his velvet nose along her neck, and she put her arms round his, and cried a little against his face. She could not tell Dick what it was that ailed her, because she did not know. But she might have found out, if Mrs. Pemberton had chanced to repeat her question, "Have you given Geoffrey Dale your heart, poor child?" For that was what she had done.



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